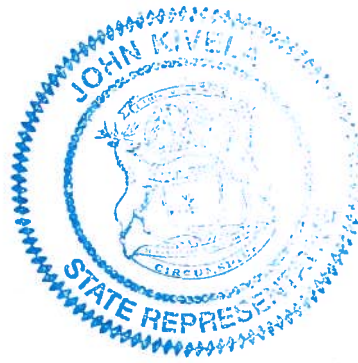


September 30, 2014

Commerce Committee
107th District
Michigan House of Representatives
Lansing, MI 48909



Statement submitted to the House Commerce Committee on House Bill HB5856.

Thank you to the Chairman and to the members of this committee for the opportunity to submit this statement in opposition to House Bill 5856.

My name is Robert Niemi, and I serve as the Mayor of the City of Marquette. The City of Marquette opposes the un-necessary burden that will result from adoption of the bill as currently considered, and the substantial accompanying shift in administrative cost and effort onto local governments.

We laud efforts to reinforce transparency in the administration of public programs and funds. However, we believe the vastly expanded DDA reporting requirement outlined in the bill are onerous and highly redundant, as already subject to a wide variety of existing State and Federal reporting statutes. The language as written would place DDAs in immediate jeopardy, in that they neither directly generate or have full control and access to requisite data otherwise provided and publically reported through the operations of State of Michigan LARA, DTMB, and Treasury Departments; the Michigan Economic Development Corporation; as well as other local organizations established pursuant to State law, such as convention and visitor bureaus, workforce development organizations; and private non-profit organizations including chambers of commerce, professional and trade associations, and private land owners and developers.

Given that the requirement for transparency is motivated by increasing public access to accurate information, mandates that reinforce unsubstantiated or debatable self-reporting would be counter productive. The proposed language fails to direct Executive Branch responsibility for making existing Statewide Data sources publically available as a basis to independently compare and corroborate DDA self-reporting. It fails to assign responsibility or provide authority for promulgating implementation requirements for development of objective statewide measures, consistent reporting methodologies and artifacts, and State level monitoring. It has been historically proven lack of strong administrative frameworks results in grossly unsubstantiated reporting, and equally dubious performance assessments.

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This bill would create substantial duplications of effort, and greatly shift responsibility for collection and evaluation of data already reported to State of Michigan by other entities, or otherwise duplicate incumbent responsibility of State-level organizations. In closing, I simply offer that DDAs are by and large charged with managing resources for the economic growth of their established jurisdictions. The legislation being considered here is not needed to provide additional tools for ensuring the success of DDAs, and if passed will force them to incur additional expenses and take away valuable resources that would otherwise be devoted to placemaking, promotional activities, and downtown improvement.

We ask you to support our opposition to this bill.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert Niemi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robert" and last name "Niemi" clearly distinguishable.

Robert Niemi, Mayor
City of Marquette